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Active trilingualism in early childhood: The motivating role of caregivers in interaction

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Active trilingualism in early childhood: The motivating role of caregivers in interaction

The present paper is concerned with the language development of two young children from two different families growing up exposed to three languages. The children live in Switzerland and have been exposed to English, French and Swiss German from infancy. The focus is on the children's production of these languages, and the contextual and affective factors which have influenced their levels of active trilingualism. The method consists of two longitudinal case studies. Monthly recordings were made by each caregiver (mother, father, and third caregiver) in dyadic interactions with the children from ages 2;1–3;1. It was found that one child had a high level of active trilingualism, speaking the language of the caregiver with that caregiver over 90% of the time (measured in utterances). By contrast, the other child had a low level of active trilingualism. An analysis of the children's language exposure, such as the position of the community language in the home, the variety of exposure, the interactional style of the caregivers, and the prestige of the languages involved indicates the importance of motivation, largely influenced by the caregivers in interaction, in explaining the children's different levels of active trilingualism.

Keywords: trilingual language acquisition, multilingual language acquisition, language choice, early trilingualism

1. Introduction

1.1. *Trilingual (first) language acquisition*

The main aim of the present study is to examine the language development of two two-year old children growing up in trilingual environments. The focus lies on their levels of active trilingualism in relation to contextual factors. The study is thus concerned with *trilingual language acquisition*. This is defined here as the language development of young children who have been exposed to three languages regularly, in a non-formal setting, before the beginning of formal schooling. *Regular exposure* refers to “daily or almost daily contact with a language through interpersonal interaction or overhearing a language” (De Houwer, 2009: 4, defining “regular input”). A *non-formal setting* refers to contexts such as the home, day care or preschool. *Formal schooling* means the beginning of (obligatory) kindergarten or school. Some researchers delineate an age which separates early trilingual language acquisition from later trilingual language acquisition. Both Hoffmann (1985) and Barnes (2006) follow the bilingualism scholar MacLaughlin (1978) in using the age of three as a marking point. Hoffmann uses the term *infant trilingual* to describe children exposed to three languages under the age of three and *child trilingual* to describe those over the age of three. Barnes prefers the term *early trilingualism* for the language development of the former. Both Hoffmann, and MacLaughlin before her, readily admit, however, that age three is an arbitrary marker. To my knowledge, Quay (2001: 153) is the only linguist who has attempted both a precise *and* theoretically grounded definition, using the term *early trilingual development* to refer to “the case of children exposed to three languages regularly before their first words”. Quay provides evidence, based on the speech data of an English–German–Japanese trilingual child, that before or near the onset of speech is a meaningful, non-arbitrary defining point. The child in her study was exposed to English and German until eleven months, and Japanese when starting day care at this age. She reports that there was no delay in his production of Japanese, and that this was the language he used most often with his English- and German-speaking parents right from the beginning of the study (at eleven months). Quay (2001) claims that regular exposure to another language before or near the onset of speech can, therefore, be considered a case of *first language acquisition* – in her study thus *trilingual first language acquisition*. De Houwer (2009), by contrast, reserves the term *bilingual first language acquisition* for

children who have been exposed to two languages regularly from birth or very soon after, such as one week (De Houwer, 1990) or one month (De Houwer, 1995). If one follows Quay's suggested definition, the language acquisition of the two children in the present study would be categorised as *trilingual first language acquisition* since one child was exposed to three languages from birth, and the other was exposed to two languages from birth and the third from the age of seven months. Note, however, that since the question of active trilingualism in early childhood, which is the focus of this study, does not rest upon the question of whether or not children are exposed to all three languages by the age of onset of speech, the more general term *trilingual language acquisition* is used.

1.2. Motivation for young children to speak another language

The present study is concerned with what motivates young children exposed to three languages to speak all three languages. It is well known that a child growing up exposed to several languages may not necessarily speak more than one of them (e.g. Döpke, 1992). If a child has no motivation to speak another language, then passive, rather than active, bi- or multilingualism may ensue. Thus, in this section, research which sheds light on young children's motivations to speak another language is discussed. Within bilingual language acquisition research, the work of both Döpke (1992) and Lanza (2004) has indicated the importance of interactional style in encouraging children to speak their non-dominant language. One area Döpke has focused on is so-called "teaching techniques" (1992: 143). An example of a teaching technique is the use of choice questions, such as *Is it big or small?* Choice questions provide the child with (at least) two labels to choose from, and thus foster vocabulary learning. The child is not only provided with the term in the target language but at the same time connected terms are also learnt. Pairs of opposites are presented, e.g. *Are you happy or sad?* as are semantic fields, e.g. *Do you want to do the blue or the yellow? Or the green? Or the pink?* (examples from transcripts of the present research). Further, and more generally, such questions encourage the child to interact in the language of the caregiver.

Another feature of interactional style described in bilingual language acquisition research is what Lanza (2004: 260) has termed "parental discourse strategies towards child language mixing". These comprise a range of caregiver responses to children's use of a language which is different to that of the caregiver. One response, for example, consists of the caregiver pretending not to understand the child's contribution ("minimal grasp strategy"). Towards the other end of the scale, quite a different type of response entails the caregiver's not commenting on the child's use of a different language, and simply continuing the conversation ("move on strategy"). Pretending not to understand signals to the child that she needs to repair her utterance, while moving on indicates to the child that her language choice was acceptable. Both the teaching techniques described by Döpke (1992), and the parental discourse strategies identified by Lanza (2004), have been shown to play a role in a young child's motivation to speak another language.

With regard to trilingual language acquisition research, a number of case studies provide evidence that the interactional style of the caregivers is influential in promoting active trilingualism. In the studies of Barnes (2006, 2011), Cruz-Ferreira (2006), Dewaele (2000, 2007, personal communication) and Wang (2008), the parents followed the "one person, one language principle" (that is, each parent consistently

speaking their native language to the child). They also insisted that the children speak these languages with their parents. All the children in these studies had high levels of active trilingualism: they spoke the language of each parent with that parent most of the time (as well as being able to speak the community language). In the studies of Montanari (2005), Quay (2001) and Quay (2008), on the other hand, in which the parents also followed the one person, one language principle but did not use insisting strategies, the children did not speak the parental languages with each parent most of the time.

Two surveys of trilingual families show the salience of another contextual factor, namely the position of the community language. In her survey of 244 trilingual families in Flanders, De Houwer (2004) found that one of the major factors in children not speaking the three languages they were exposed to was the community language being used at home. In more than four-fifths of the families in which the children were not actively trilingual the community language was present in the parental input. Braun and Cline (2010), in their survey of 35 families in England and 35 in Germany, came to a similar (though not identical) conclusion. They found that the community language not being a native language of either parent was an important factor in parents being able to promote the two home languages, and thus active trilingualism. A case study by Kazzazi (2007, 2011) supports these findings. The family in this study lived in Germany and the parents followed the one person, one language strategy, the mother speaking English to the children and the father Farsi. The parents used insisting strategies to a certain extent. However, German (the community language) was the language of communication between the parents, as well as one of the mother's native languages. The children generally preferred to speak German when addressing their parents. It appears, therefore, that when parents speak the language of the environment in the home (or, even if they do not speak it there, when children know that it is a parent's native language), children's motivation to speak other languages is lower.

Besides language presentation patterns, Braun and Cline (2010) also discuss the influence of grandparents and other family members with regard to fostering active trilingualism. They found that one type of family constellation was more favourable for fostering two non-community languages, namely the one in which each parent spoke a single different native language (all families in the study lived in speech communities in which a third language was spoken). Children of these families tended to have monolingual grandparents who did not speak the community language of the child. Braun and Cline argue that communication with these monolingual grandparents was likely to have been an incentive for family members to maintain the two non-community languages.

Maneva (2004) highlights the importance not of other family members but of young children's playmates. She examined the multilingual language acquisition of her daughter with a focus on the "sociocultural factors that appear to play a significant role in the acquisition process" (2004: 110). One contextual factor Maneva's study shows to be salient is that of peer language input. Maneva distinguishes between both active and passive language exposure as well as non-egalitarian exposure (from adult to child) and egalitarian exposure (from child to child). In the case of her subject, active, egalitarian exposure – i.e. the opportunity to play with peers – could be related to the child's language development. Between the ages of two and four, whenever the

child had the opportunity to play with children who spoke the non-community languages, she “demonstrated a marked improvement in the language in which the exposure had occurred” (2004: 114). In two different cases studies, Quay (2001, 2008) also discusses the role of peers at daycare in accounting for the two children’s general preference for the community language.

Finally, Barron-Hauwaert (2000) has observed that in trilingual family situations a language with high world status is more likely to be the one chosen as the language of communication between the parents. While she does not discuss how the status of a language, nor the choice of couple language, affects children’s motivation to speak this language, the possible links are explored in the present study (see Section 3.3.4).

Besides these studies, further trilingual language acquisition research offers some insights into the influence of contextual factors on active trilingualism in early childhood (e.g. Safont-Jordà, 2011 or Stavans and Swisher, 2006). An overview of trilingual language acquisition research with relevance to the relationship between contextual factors and active trilingualism can be seen in Table 1.

[Table 1 may be inserted here or after the next paragraph]

The studies described in this section suggest that motivational factors such as being encouraged to interact in the caregiver’s language (Döpke, 1992), being discouraged not to speak a different language from that of the caregiver (Lanza, 2004), the absence of the community language in the home – and thus motivation to speak the non-community languages (De Houwer, 2004), as well as the desire to communicate with other family members (Braun and Cline, 2010) and peers (Maneva, 2004; Quay 2001, 2008) play a role in multilingual language acquisition. Further, Baron-Hauwert (2000) mentions how the status of certain languages affects their being chosen as the couple language. The present study is informed by these findings and elaborates on these issues by focusing on how contextual and affective factors may promote active trilingualism.

[Table 1 may be inserted here or above this paragraph]

2. Research design

2.1. Research questions

The research consists of two longitudinal case studies of young children growing up with three languages in Switzerland. Its aim was to find out what contextual factors promote or hinder active trilingualism. For the purpose of the study the following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent do the children produce the languages of their caregivers?
2. To what extent is caregiver consistency in speaking their own language and the children’s language production related?
3. What further contextual factors can explain language choice?

2.2. Participants

The case studies reported on here involve two children from two different families. In one family the subject, Lina (all names are pseudonyms), lives in German-speaking Switzerland and is growing up with a Swiss mother who speaks to her in Swiss German and a Belgian father who speaks to her in French. Lina is exposed to her third

language, English, via two sources: her parents speak English to each other and Lina has an American aunt who lives nearby and sees her often. Lina's mother is at home full time; thus, the child is mainly cared for by her mother except for two afternoons at a local playgroup. Her father works full time but also happened to be at home during the first six months of the case study due to a period of unemployment. Lina's aunt visits the family approximately twice a week. The aunt and the family were also living together in the same house for two months when Lina was a year and a half. The child has little media exposure to any language (the family does not have a television). However, she has had frequent and intensive exposure to all three languages via her three caregivers from birth.

The second family lives in French-speaking Switzerland. The subject, Elliot, has an English mother (raised in South Africa), who speaks to her son in English. His father is Swiss and speaks to him in Swiss German, while the parents speak English to each other. Elliot began French-language childcare (three full days a week) at the age of seven months. His mother is at home on the other two weekdays. The father is completely away from home during the week, working in another part of the country, and therefore sees his son only on weekends and holidays. The child does, however, have additional exposure to Swiss German via his paternal grandmother, who visits the family approximately once a month and stays for several days at a time when the mother is abroad on business (the father is away at these times as well). Via television and DVDs Elliot also has a certain amount of media exposure to all three languages. Regular and intensive exposure, however, comes from his caregivers: he has had regular exposure to his parental languages (English and Swiss German) from birth and the community language (French) from the age of seven months. An overview of the main language input sources can be seen in Table 2.

[insert Table 2]

2.3. Recording, transcription and units of analysis

The children were recorded once a month for one year between the ages of two and just over three, as well as once again at ages three and a half and four. They were recorded by their parents as well as a third caregiver who spoke the third language. In Lina's case, the third person was her English-speaking aunt, in Elliot's case it was a French-speaking babysitter. Each set of recordings contain four different constellations: child + mother, child + father, child + both parents, and child + third caregiver. The caregivers were asked to make half-hour recordings of their usual interactions with the children. The recordings thus consist of various activities: playing, book-reading, mealtimes, getting ready for bed routines, and so on. For each dyadic recording, a quarter of an hour close to the beginning of the recording was transcribed. The transcription conventions are based on the CHAT (Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcription) style (MacWhinney, 2011). In the examples presented in this paper, the three different languages are represented as follows: English is in bold, French is in italics and Swiss German is in small capitals. Elements which can be assigned to two languages are marked doubly. The results discussed in this paper are from the transcriptions of the dyadic recordings of the main part of the study, that is, the twelve monthly sets of recordings from ages 2;1–3;1. To give the reader an idea of the scope of the data, the utterances for the two children combined number 8,748.

Units of speech used in the analysis consisted of utterances and conversational turns. As in classic studies of bilingual child language acquisition (De Houwer 1990, Lanza 2004), the utterance was determined according to intonational contour. A segment of speech was considered an utterance whenever there was a terminal intonation contour. The three types of terminal contour were final (marked by a period), appealing (marked by a question mark) and exclamatory (marked by an exclamation mark). The main reference works used for intonation were Cruttenden (1997) and Botinis, Granström and Möbius (2001). A conversational turn was defined as any stretch of speech on the part of one interlocutor until another interlocutor took the floor.

2.4. The consistency of the caregivers in speaking their native languages

All six caregivers claimed to follow the one person, one language principle, that is, they claimed to consistently speak their own native language to the child. This claim was validated in an examination of their language use in the recordings. All the caregivers' turns were coded for language, and the results show that the lowest rate of consistency was 89.11% and the highest 99.66%. These percentages refer to the number of turns produced by the caregivers uniquely in their native language. The lowest rate is that of Lina's father, who produced 876/983 turns uniquely in French when in conversation with his daughter (of his remaining turns, 100 were either uniquely in Swiss German or contained a mixture of French and Swiss German, while the other seven were either uniquely in English or contained some English). The highest rate is that of Lina's aunt, who produced 1162/1166 turns uniquely in English when in conversation with her niece (the other four turns consisted of a mixture of English and Swiss German). Thus, the caregivers ranged from quite to very consistent in their adherence to the one person, one language principle. An overview can be seen in Table 3.

[insert Table 3]

3. Results and discussion

3.1. To what extent do the children produce the languages of their caregivers?

Comparing the utterances produced uniquely in one of the three languages (i.e. excluding ambiguous and mixed utterances), we find that Lina produced 884/910 utterances in Swiss German in conversation with her mother (97%), 108/819 utterances in French in conversation with her father (13%) and 483/890 utterances in English in conversation with her aunt (54%). Elliot, on the other hand, produced 951/1026 utterances in English in conversation with his mother (93%), 1143/1240 utterances in Swiss German in conversation with his father (92%) and 1198/1236 utterances in French in conversation with his babysitter (97%). These figures are illustrated in Figure 1.

[insert Figure 1]

3.2. To what extent is caregiver consistency and the children's language production related?

We see that the language production of the two children differs considerably; despite the consistency of their caregivers, the children display very different levels of active trilingualism. This is of course not entirely surprising. It has already been shown in bilingualism research (e.g. Döpke, 1992) that following the one person, one language strategy alone is no guarantee for the active use of more than one language on the part

of the child; in a bi- or multilingual situation, a child often needs some further motivation for speaking a particular language. Nevertheless, it is vital to establish the extent to which the caregivers actually speak their native languages to the children before other reasons for language choice can be explored. The discussion which follows focuses on these reasons.

3.3. What further contextual factors can explain language choice?

3.3.1. Position of the community language

De Houwer (2004) and Braun and Cline (2010) show the importance of the community language not being spoken in the home for active trilingualism. The community language was not used in Elliot's home but was in Lina's. According to these two studies, therefore, Elliot had better chances than Lina for becoming actively trilingual from the beginning. For Elliot, the community language, French, had no place in his home. Further, he had an even proportion of input in the community language (three days a week of daycare) and his maternal language, English. For Lina on the other hand, the community language, Swiss German, was also her maternal language. As such, it was dominant both inside and outside the home, both in terms of amount of exposure and place of exposure.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Lina produced so much Swiss German. Nor is it surprising that Elliot produced a great deal of French, since this was the community language, as well as a great deal of English, since this was the main home language – his maternal language and the language of communication between his parents. What is surprising, however, is how much of his paternal language (Swiss German) Elliot spoke. Recall that his father lived away from home five days a week, and the couple language was English. It is also rather surprising that Lina produced so little of her father's language (French) since he was at home much more than Elliot's father, and even at home on a full time basis during half of the case study. What follows is a discussion of contextual and affective factors which offers an explanation for this difference.

3.3.2. Input from others

Braun and Cline (2010) discuss the influence of grandparents and other family members when it comes to promoting non-community languages, while Maneva (2004) highlights the role of peer interaction. Since neither child has peer exposure to the non-community languages, the second point will not be discussed. With regard to the influence of other adults, in Elliot's case there is a Swiss-German speaking paternal grandmother who looks after him for several days every month when his mother is away on business. She also has Elliot to stay with her at her home, sometimes for a week at a time. Elliot's mother reported that after one such visit, she heard her son speaking Swiss German to himself. In addition, there are family friends, including Elliot's godfather, who speak Swiss German – and the father insists that they do indeed stick to Swiss German when speaking to Elliot, even though they are tempted to speak English. With regard to the other non-community language, English, Elliot hears this language spoken by friends of his parents, as well as by English-speaking neighbours in his community.

In Lina's case, however, her paternal grandmother lives in Belgium and they only see each other twice a year. Lina has no other contact with any other speakers of French (besides of course her father). With English, the situation is similar. Although she

regularly hears English from two sources (her parents' conversation and her aunt), it cannot be said that Lina has access to an English-speaking community.

Thus, Elliot is made aware of, and is part of, Swiss German- and English-speaking worlds, whereas Lina does not have this widened dimension for her two non-community languages, French and English. Input from friends and family create affective reasons for Elliot to speak Swiss German in particular (for English, other factors such as quantity of input play a role). Elliot, crucially, sees a point in speaking Swiss German: it is spoken by people to whom he is close and whom he sees regularly. There is thus a strong motivational component in Elliot's production of his paternal language.

However, it is uncertain whether this reason can completely explain the very high amount of Swiss German that Elliot produces with his father. While the enriched Swiss German environment surely motivates Elliot to speak this language, his extremely high consistency warrants further explanation. In addition, we are still left with the question of why Lina produces considerably more English with her aunt than French with her father. We have seen that she speaks to her aunt in English around half the time – even though this is a language that she only interacts in several times as week. In the following section, the interactional style of both Lina's father and aunt, as well as Elliot's father, is examined in an attempt to account for these results.

3.3.3. Interactional style

One significant aspect of interactional style in the context of a bi- or multilingual upbringing is how caregivers react when the child does not use their language. Do they try to force the child to do so, by pretending not to understand or by telling the child to translate? Or do they accept the child's utterances or even code-switch themselves? In the present analysis of the caregivers' responses to child language mixing, I have relied on Lanza's (2004) continuum of parental discourse strategies, described in Section 1.3. Since the analysis is reported on in Chevalier (in press), the results are merely summarised here: Lina's father usually accepts his daughter's utterances in any language and does not insist upon her using French. Lina's aunt and Elliot's father, on the other hand, most commonly react to the children's choice of a different language by translating the item into the language that they are trying to promote. They thus make it clear which language is expected of the child, and provide appropriate vocabulary in that language. In this way, Lina is encouraged to speak the language of her aunt (English), and Elliot that of his father (Swiss German).

Two further aspects of conversational style were shown to be important with regard to the children's production of their minority languages. One was the use of specific language teaching techniques, used by Lina's aunt to promote English. For example, she asks many choice questions or "or-questions" (Döpke, 1992: 150). In the corpus, we find 84 such questions asked by Lina's aunt. 57 of these (68%) result in Lina using English, as is exemplified below.

Example 1	Lina (age 3;0) and aunt
*AUN:	do you like dried apple? mhm? is it good or bad?
*LIN:	good.

As in the example above, in the majority of these cases (54/57) Lina responds by choosing one of the items in question. In only 13/84 or 15% of the cases does Lina respond in Swiss German, generally translating the item in question (9/13). For the rest of the time (14/84), there is either no response, the response is incomprehensible, or it is ambiguous (all of these responses were categorised as “other”). Table 4 gives an overview of Lina’s responses.

[insert Table 4]

An example of Lina’s aunt’s use of such questions in context can be seen below. Here, the aunt is getting Lina to describe a fly in the room.

Example 2	Lina (age 2;6) and aunt
@Situation:	a fly is buzzing in the room
*AUN:	it is a fly. is it big [!] or small?
*LIN:	small.
*AUN:	small. is it black or white?
*LIN:	black.

Lina’s father, on the other hand, makes little use of choice questions: nine in the entire corpus. Four of these result in Lina’s use of her paternal language, French, three in her continued use of Swiss German, one response is ambiguous, and one is incomprehensible. Thus we can see that when Lina’s father does ask such questions, his rate of success in getting Lina to use French is higher than her general rate of French use.

Apart from choice questions, another type of teaching technique which Lina’s aunt makes much use of is asking questions which require lexical responses. In the transcript of the first recording, all examples of such questions were extracted. In this transcript Lina’s aunt asks 25 such questions, and Lina responds in English eleven times. In five cases she provides the expected answer, as in the example below.

Example 3	Lina (age 2;1) and aunt
*AUN:	what’s that?
%com:	question requiring lexical response
*LIN:	bird.
%com:	expected response
*AUN:	bird.

In six further cases she gives a different response, though still in English:

Example 4	Lina (age 2;1) and aunt
*AUN:	what’s this?
%com:	question requiring lexical response
*LIN:	this.
%com:	unexpected response in target language
*AUN:	is this a bird?
*LIN:	bird.

In the same recording set (set I), Lina's father asks just four such questions, one of which results in a response in French (the expected answer).

Lina's aunt often persists until the child produces the expected answer. We can see this in her follow-up of the unexpected response in example 4, above. When Lina initially fails to produce the word **bird**, and simply repeats the **this** of **what's this?**, Lina's aunt models the word in her next question, **is this a bird?** This modelling results in Lina's production of the word. We can also observe the aunt's persistence when Lina does not immediately respond to choice questions in English. In the example below, when two consecutive choice questions do not meet with the required response, Lina's aunt then switches to a technique of prompting, giving the first phoneme of the word, then trailing off.

Example 5	Lina (age 2;5) and aunt
*AUN:	is it hot or cold?
*LIN:	HEISS.
%eng:	hot.
*AUN:	is it hot or cold?
*LIN:	UH HEISS.
*AUN:	h+...
*LIN:	hot.
*AUN:	good.

A second important difference in the styles of Lina's aunt and father is their level of intensity in interacting. Lina's aunt is an East Coast American who is talkative and gregarious; she has what Tannen (2006: 354) has called a "high-involvement" style. Lina's father, by contrast, is quieter. The aunt plays intensive, sometimes lively games, involving running and shouting. Lina's father's activities with his daughter, on the other hand, are usually calm, e.g. sitting at the table making things out of play dough, playing a board game, or cooking together. Lina's aunt talks animatedly and asks many questions; she thus provides lively input, and demands frequent output. The intensive interaction Lina experiences in English no doubt fosters her use of English. The style of Lina's father is far less intensive and thus less motivating. While he does ask questions, if Lina does not respond he does not usually insist – unlike Lina's aunt. He either moves on or answers the questions himself. The latter can be seen in the following example.

Example 6	Lina (age 2;1) and father
@Situation:	Looking at a picture book
*FAT:	<i>c'est cuillère. et là?</i>
%eng:	it's spoon. and there?
%com:	Lina does not respond
*FAT:	<i>fourchette. et ici, couteau. et là on a une tasse, pour boire le café.</i>
%eng:	fork. and here, knife. and there we have a cup, to drink coffee.

Lina's father's fairly low-involvement style (Tannen, 2006) is well exemplified when one compares his manner of story-telling with that of Elliot's father. Like Lina's aunt, Elliot's father also has a more intense manner of interaction. In the first recordings both fathers are telling a story based on a picture book. While Elliot's father frequently asks questions about elements of the story, Lina's father tends simply to

tell it. In the first recording of Elliot and his father (age 2;1), there are 43 turns which end in a question. In the first recording of Lina and her father (age 2;1), in the same length of time, there are only ten turns which end in a question. We can also observe the different levels of interaction by measuring the length of the fathers' longest turns. Elliot's father's longest turn, before his son contributes, is 34 seconds. Lina's father's longest turn, on the other hand, is two entire minutes.

These different levels of interaction when comparing the two fathers are further reflected in the following measurement: in the 3 hours 54 minutes of speech data transcribed for the dyad Lina + father, Lina's father produces 983 turns. In only 2 hours 45 minutes of speech data transcribed for the dyad Elliot + father, however, Elliot's father produces 1,664 turns. Overall there is then much more interaction between Elliot and his father, their conversations comprising many questions and responses. An example of the question-answer sequences so typical of their exchanges can be seen below.

Example 7 Elliot (age 2;2) and father
 @Situation: Looking at a picture book
 *FAT: WAS ISCH DAS?
 %eng: what's that?
 *ELL: LAPME.
 %eng: lamp.
 %pho: metathesis, target: LAMPE
 *FAT: LAMPE.
 *ELL: E LAMPE.
 %eng: a lamp.
 *FAT: BRAVO ELLIOT. BRAVO BRAVO BRAVO. UND DAS ISCH ES BETT. BETT.
 %eng: [...]. and that's a bed. bed.
 *ELL: BETT.
 %eng: bed.
 *FAT: JAWOOL. UH, LUG E MAL DA. WAS ISCH DAS?
 %eng: yes. oh, look there. what's that?
 *ELL: VELO.
 %eng: bicycle.
 %pho: ['vilə]
 *FAT: ES VELO. JAWOOL. UND DAS DA?
 %eng: a bicycle. yes, and that there?
 *ELL: VELO.
 %pho: ['vilə]
 *FAT: JA, DASCH ES VELO FÜR DE ELLIOT. HÄ, ES CHLIISES VELO? UND
 DASCH ES GROOSSES VELO. UND WÄR ISCH DAS DA?
 %eng: yes, that's a bicycle for Elliot. huh, a little bicycle? and that's a big
 bicycle. and who's that?
 *ELL: MON(D).
 %eng: moon.
 *FAT: DASCH DE MOND. JAWOOL. MOND UND STÄ:RNE. UND DEN HÄMMER
 NA [/-] DAS ISCH EN KOFFER.
 %eng: that's the moon. yes. moon and stars. and then we have also [/-]
 that's a suitcase.

*ELL: KOFFER.
 %eng: suitcase.
 %pho: ['kɔgal], target: ['kɔfər]
 *FAT: JA, JEZ GÖMMER DEN GLI ID FERIE, UND DEN TÜEND MER DE KOFFER
 PAKE. KOFFER.
 %eng: yes, we're going on holidays soon, and we'll pack the suitcase.
 suitcase.
 *ELL: KOFFER.
 %phon. ['gɔfəl], target: ['kɔfər]
 *FAT: JAWOOL, KOFFER.
 %eng: yes, suitcase.
 *ELL: BALL.
 *FAT: DASCH DE BALL. DASCH EN BALL. JAWOOL. WÄM GHÖRT DE BALL?
 %eng: that's the ball. that's a ball. yes. whose ball is it?

Elliot's father's involved and didactic style of interaction can be well seen in this example. He firstly elicits the name of an object (a lamp). When Elliot produces the word in a metathesised version (LAPME instead of LAMPE), his father corrects the pronunciation. After Elliot produces the word correctly, his father showers him with praise, with no less than four instances of BRAVO, and then models the next word for him, BETT ('bed'), which Elliot repeats. With the following object named, VELO ('bicycle'), his father reinforces the word by framing it in a number of ways ('a bicycle for Elliot', 'a little bicycle', 'a big bicycle'). The next word the father elicits is MOND ('moon'). After Elliot produces the word, his father invokes another word from the same semantic field: STÄRNE ('stars'). With the next object named, KOFFER ('suitcase'), the father expands on the topic, talking about their upcoming holidays, and how they will pack their suitcase. Finally, Elliot spontaneously names an object, a ball, and his father expands on the child's topic, asking whose ball it is. We see, therefore, that Elliot's father is focused on his son's contributions and makes this felt via his lively elaboration of Elliot's topics. This kind of didactic style can be observed throughout the recordings between Elliot and his father, a style which encourages the child to interact in his father's language.

As a final point in the context of high-involvement style, Lina's aunt and Elliot's father frequently praise the children for their production of English and Swiss German, respectively (this can be seen in examples 5 and 7). By contrast, this is something Lina's father rarely does. In addition, their praise is often enthusiastic (for example, the aunt sometimes accompanies it by high-five gestures). Such praise can only further encourage the children to speak the languages of these particular interlocutors.

3.3.4. *Status of English*

Motivation to speak a particular language may also be derived from the status of that language. In the case of Lina and Elliot, English has gained a particular status in their homes, which is likely to influence their desire to speak this language. The status of English as a world language has resulted in it being the language of communication between both sets of parents (see also Barron-Hauwaert 2000). English is the language Lina's parents spoke together when they first met and which they chose to continue to speak as a couple. It was the obvious choice as the language of

communication for Elliot's parents, since Elliot's mother does not speak Swiss German, and Elliot's father speaks English to a high degree of fluency. The fact that parents speak a particular language together is likely, from the child's perspective, to underline its importance. This importance may have been particularly strong in the case of Lina, since neither parent used this language with her: for Lina, English gained the special status of being the "parents' language". That children might be sensitive to their parents speaking a different language to the ones spoken to them is not surprising. In two other multilingual families interviewed where this was the case (both with English as the *lingua franca*), the children were clearly aware of the situation: in one family, the child started producing English of her own accord, while in the other, the child became upset because he could not understand what his parents were saying. It is of note that Lina also occasionally spontaneously speaks English to her parents. In one instance, Lina's father was gently teasing the child, and her mother admonished him to "leave her". Lina turned to her father and also advised him: "leave her!". In another instance, when Lina's father offered her aunt a cup of coffee, Lina clamoured "coffee please papa".

We see, therefore, that the high world status of English has been influential in it being chosen as the language of communication between the two couples in this study, which in turn has resulted in English having a particular status in the home. For Elliot it is the main family language since it is spoken by the mother to her son and by both parents together, and for Lina it has the special status of being the parents' language. A two-year-old can, of course, have no conception of the global status of a language. However, a language having a certain status in the home may be particularly motivating for children to want to speak that language.

4. Conclusion

In this study, the question of what promotes or hinders active trilingualism was explored via longitudinal case studies of two young children growing up exposed to three languages in Switzerland. We saw that the children had very different levels of active trilingualism (research question 1), despite the fact that the caregivers were quite to very consistent in speaking their own native languages to the children (research question 2). The context of language acquisition was analysed in order to identify the most salient reasons for the levels of active trilingualism of each child (research question 3). The factors explored were based on previous findings from both bilingual (Döpke, 1992; Lanza, 2004) and trilingual language acquisition research (Barnes, 2006, 2011; Barron-Hauwert, 2000; Braun and Cline, 2010; Cruz-Ferreira, 2006; De Houwer, 2004; Dewaele, 2000, 2007; Kazzazi, 2007, 2011; Maneva, 2004; Montanari, 2005; Quay, 2001, 2008; Wang, 2008).

The first contextual factor discussed was the language constellation in the family – specifically, the absence of the community language in the home. This language constellation gave Elliot a better chance for becoming actively trilingual from the beginning since there was an obvious motivation to speak the two non-community languages, English and Swiss German: these were the clearly-defined home languages. Elliot's home languages were further supported by a variety of contacts. Various people that he interacted with spoke his parents' languages: his parents' friends (both languages), relatives (especially Swiss German) and some people in the neighbourhood (English). Lina, on the other hand, did not have such access to French- and English-speaking worlds. She was not made to feel a part of another speech

community beside her Swiss-German one. This no doubt diminished her motivation to speak any other language besides the community one. The study further shows that languages for which there is considerably less input need to be promoted actively in conversation. Elliot's father and Lina's aunt did this with their style of conversation, which encouraged the children to speak their languages (Swiss German and English respectively). Elliot had quite limited exposure to his paternal language in terms of quantity – his father was away from home throughout the entire week. Yet, he produced a huge amount of it – over 90% of his utterances with his father were in the paternal language. The importance of interactional style is shown even more clearly with Lina. In this case, the same child produced considerably more of a language she had less interaction in. Lina spoke much more English with her aunt than French with her father, even though she only saw her aunt a few times a week. It can be seen, therefore, that via a certain interactional style caregivers can motivate children to speak a particular language. Indeed, around Lina's third birthday, her father began short teaching-style sessions (naming objects and colours) in which Lina produced considerably more of her paternal language. Finally, the prestige of English in the home as the couple language may well have raised the status of this language in the eyes of the children, and thus have further motivated them to speak this language.

The findings of this study suggest that motivation, largely influenced by the role of the caregivers in interaction, affects the extent to which young children speak the languages they are exposed to. Generally, it supports previous findings on the relevance of contextual factors in explaining aspects trilingual language development (see studies listed in Table 1), and more specifically, it contributes to our understanding of the role of motivation in explaining very different levels of active trilingualism.

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Table 1: Trilingual language acquisition research with relevance to the relationship between contextual factors and active trilingualism

Author (year)	Participants; instrument	Title of study
Barnes (2006)	Jenny aged 1;11–3;6; 32 sets of audio and video tapes (further details given, p. 95)	Early trilingualism: A focus on questions
Barnes (2011)	Same child as above	The influence of child-directed speech in early trilingualism
Barron-Hauwaert (2000)	12 children aged between 2 and 12; questionnaire (not reproduced but further details given p. 2)	Issues surrounding trilingual families. Children with simultaneous exposure to three languages
Braun and Cline (2010)	35 families in England, 35 in Germany; parental interviews (further details given p. 114)	Trilingual families in mainly monolingual societies: Working towards a typology
Chevalier (in press)	Lina aged 2;1–3;1; monthly audio recordings for first year, further recordings, interviews (further details given)	Caregiver responses to the language mixing of a young trilingual
Cruz-Ferreira (2006)	Three children to age 13; circa 22 hours of audio recordings, 24 hours of video recordings, diary notes (further details given, pp. 40–49)	Three is a crowd? Acquiring Portuguese in a trilingual environment
De Houwer (2004)	244 families; questionnaire (reproduced p. 134; further details given pp.119–121)	Trilingual input and children's language use in trilingual families in Flanders
Dewaele (2000)	Livia to age 3; video recording “at regular intervals” (p. 41), diary	Trilingual first language acquisition: Exploration of a linguistic “miracle”
Dewaele (2007)	Same child as above till age 10	Still trilingual at ten: Livia's multilingual journey
Faingold (1999)	Noam to age 14;3; audio-recording once a week from 0;10–3;0, diary from 0;6–14;3 (further details given pp. 283–284)	The re-emergence of Spanish and Hebrew in a multilingual adolescent
Helot (1988)	Two families (only one considered here as a case of trilingual language acquisition)	Bringing up children in English, French and Irish: Two case studies
Hoffmann (1985)	Cristina to age 8;5 and Pascual to 5;6; notes, diary entries by both parents, recordings, (mainly vocabulary recall) tests	Towards a description of trilingual competence
Kazzazi (2007)	Anusheh to age 5;2; notes, audiotapes, videotapes over 3 years 9 months	<i>Man se tā baladam</i> : Language awareness in a trilingual child
Kazzazi (2011)	Same as above plus brother Irman to age 11;7, (further details given p.	<i>Ich brauche mix-cough</i> : Cross-linguistic influence involving

	69)	German, English and Farsi
Maneva (2004)	Daria to age 5; audio and written recordings and observations over 5 years	A case study of multilingual language acquisition from 0 to 5 years
Montanari (2005)	Kathryn, 1 st set of recordings, average age: 1;9, 2 nd set of recordings, average age: 2;4; audio recordings of 2 two-week periods taken from larger data base (further details given p. 1663)	A longitudinal study of language choice in a developing trilingual child
Montanari (2010)	Same child as above	Language differentiation in early trilingual development: Evidence from a case study
Montanari (2011)	Same child as above	Phonological differentiation before age two in a Tagalog-Spanish-English trilingual child
Quay (2001)	Freddy aged 0;11–1;10; questionnaire, interviews, development inventory, diaries, video recordings (further details given pp. 164–167)	Managing linguistic boundaries in early trilingual development
Quay (2008)	Xiaoxiao aged 1;10–2;4; video recordings (further details given p. 13)	Dinner conversations with a trilingual two-year-old: Language socialization in a multilingual context
Quay (2011)	Same children as in (2001) and (2008)	Trilingual toddlers at daycare centres: The role of caregivers and peers in language development
Safont-Jordà (2011)	Pau aged 2;6–3;6; 35 scripts of 30–60 minute-long recordings (further details given p. 266)	Early requestive development in consecutive third language learning
Stavans and Swisher (2006)	Two children, E aged 5;5–7;1 and M aged 2;6–4;2; audio recordings (further details given p. 204)	Language switching as a window on trilingual acquisition
Wang (2008)	Léandre and Dominique to age 11; audio and video recordings, notes (further details given p. 6)	Growing up with three languages: Birth to eleven

Table 2: Overview of main language input sources

	Mother	Father	Community	Parental communication	Aunt (Lina) / Grandmother (Elliot)
Lina	Swiss German	French	Swiss German	English	English
Elliot	English	Swiss German	French	English	Swiss German

Table 3: Consistency of caregivers with regard to speaking their native language

Caregiver	Number of turns in native language/total turns	Percentage of turns in native language
Lina's mother	955/970	98.45
Lina's father	876/983	89.11
Lina's aunt	1162/1166	99.66
Elliot's mother	1086/1132	95.94
Elliot's father	1607/1664	96.57
Elliot's babysitter	1167/1179	98.98

Table 4: Lina's responses to aunt's choice questions

Transcription set	Age	Target L used		Non target L used		Other	Total
		<i>chooses one item</i>	<i>other use</i>	<i>translates one item</i>	<i>other use</i>		
I	2;01.07	0	0	0	0	2	2
II	2;02.08	1	0	0	0	0	1
III	2;03.04	4	0	0	0	0	4
IV	2;04.02	7	0	0	1	1	9
V	2;05.03	4	1	3	1	0	9
VI	2;06.02	6	0	1	0	1	8
VII	2;07.21	13	0	1	1	4	19
VIII	2;09.10	7	1	0	0	3	11
IX	2;10.06	1	1	2	1	0	5
X	2;10.26	2	0	1	0	1	4
XI	3;00.08	5	0	1	0	1	7
XII	3;01.05	4	0	0	0	1	5
Sub-total		54	3	9	4	14	84
Total			57		13	14	84
%			68		15	17	100

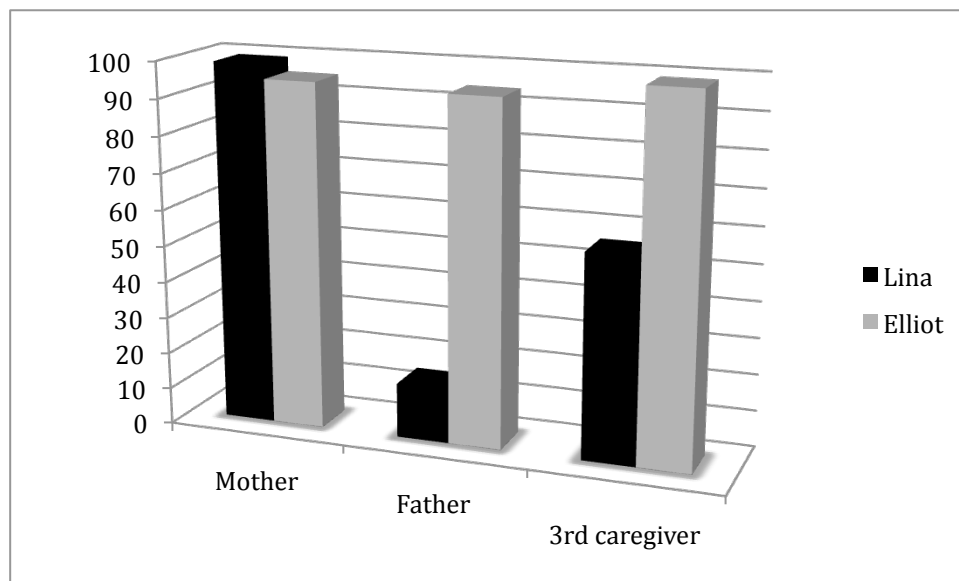


Figure 1: Percentage of utterances produced by Lina and Elliot in the language spoken by caregiver